

American Attitudes: Changing Opinion on the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

May 27, 2021

Table of Contents

Executive Summary.....1

I. Attitudes Toward Israelis and Palestinians.....3

II. Issues from the Recent Conflict.....11

III. Settlements and US Policy.....16

IV. Democrats vs. Republicans.....19

Trendlines.....21

Demographics and Methodology26

Executive Summary

Americans attitudes toward the Israeli-Palestinian conflict are moving in the direction of seeking a more balanced policy. There is, however, **a deep partisan gap on many issues related to the conflict**. The split, where it exists, has become ideological with self-identified Liberals and Conservatives holding near mirror-image views on many issues.

I. Attitudes Toward Israelis and Palestinians:

1/2. Overall, **Americans have favorable views toward both Israelis (58%) and Palestinians (39%)**.

While Democrats and Republicans both have more favorable than unfavorable views of Israelis (Democrats 46% vs. 21%; Republicans 68% vs. 9%), they diverge on their views of the Palestinians (Democrats 51% vs. 14%; Republicans 30% vs. 40%).

It is significant to note that Democrats now view Palestinians more favorably than they do Israelis (51% vs. 46%). [Figures 1 & 2]

3. Overall, **Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu retains a net 39% to 25% favorable rating. But among Democrats only 21% view him favorably as opposed to 40% who have an unfavorable view.** Among Republicans his favorable-unfavorable ratings are 57% and 12% respectively.

Both Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas and Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh are viewed unfavorably by a strong plurality of Americans (Abbas: 17% vs. 38%; Haniyeh 13% vs. 42%). [Figure 3]

4. When asked if the Biden administration should favor Israelis or Palestinians in its policy toward the conflict, or if it should strike a balance between the two: 25% of respondents overall prefer supporting the Israelis and 8% say the administration should favor the Palestinians, but **46% say a balanced policy is best.**

Here too, there is a partisan divide, with **54% of Democrats supporting a balanced policy** as opposed to 16% who prefer a policy that supports Israel and 11% who support one that favors Palestinians. **Only 34% of Republicans favor a balanced policy**, while a plurality of 37% want a policy that favors Israel. [Figure 4]

5. When asked if the US "should always side with Israel" or "should act as a fair and impartial broker between Israelis and Palestinians," 55% of US respondents say "fair and impartial broker" as opposed to only 27% who say we should "always side with Israel." **Democrats overwhelmingly support the honest broker role 63% to 20%, while Republicans are evenly divided 40% to 40%.** [Figure 5].

6/7. **There are two areas where there is strong bipartisan consensus: whether Palestinians and Israelis are "equal people deserving of equal rights" and support for a Palestinian state alongside Israel.**

Almost three-quarters of all Americans say Palestinians and Israelis are equal people and are entitled to equal rights, including 80% of Democrats and 67% of Republicans.

Nearly one-half of all respondents agree that an independent Palestinian state should be part of a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict with only 12% disagreeing. Among Democrats the split is overwhelmingly in favor of a Palestinian state (60% vs. 7%), and among Republicans more than two to one support it as well (38% vs. 17%). [Figures 6 & 7]

II. The recent conflict:

8. The partisan divide is also evident with regard to the recent conflict between Israelis and Palestinians. Overall, 30% of respondents say Israel's use of force in Gaza was "too much," 24% say it was "just right," and 11% say it was "not enough." **Democrats are more likely to say Israel used too much force (43%)** than that it was just right (16%) or not enough (6%). On the other hand, only 18% of Republicans say Israel used too much force, while 32% say it was just right and 16% say it wasn't enough. [Figure 8]

9. As a result of the recent conflict, 28% of US respondents say they have more sympathy for people on both sides of the conflict; 26% say it increased their sympathy for Israelis and 16% are now more sympathetic to Palestinians. More Democrats say their sympathy for Palestinians increased (28%) than record increased sympathy for Israel (16%). Among Republicans, 41% say their sympathy for Israel increased, while only 7% say they now have more sympathy for the Palestinians. For both Democrats and Republicans, 26% have increased sympathy for both sides. [Figure 9]

10. There is a partisan divide as to whether Israel is right to evict Palestinian homeowners from East Jerusalem. Overall, **29% of respondents agree that Israel is right to evict these Palestinians, while 42% disagree.** For Democrats, disagreement is stronger, with 51% saying Israel is wrong to evict Palestinians from their homes, while 26% side with Israel. Republicans are closely divided, with 37% agreeing with Israeli evictions and 33% disagreeing. [Figure 10]

11. When asked about the efforts by some Democrats to hold off on \$735 million in precision bombs for Israel approved by President Biden this month, we find overall opinion leaning away from Biden, especially among Democrats. **Among all respondents, 43% agree with congressional Democrats who want to hold off on the weapons deal,** while 32% support Biden's approval of the sale of precision munitions to Israel. **Among Democratic respondents, a majority supports congressional efforts to hold up on the sale (52%),** while 27% support Biden's approval. **Republicans, on the other hand, support the sale by a margin of 42% to 35%.** [Figure 11]

III. Settlements and US policy:

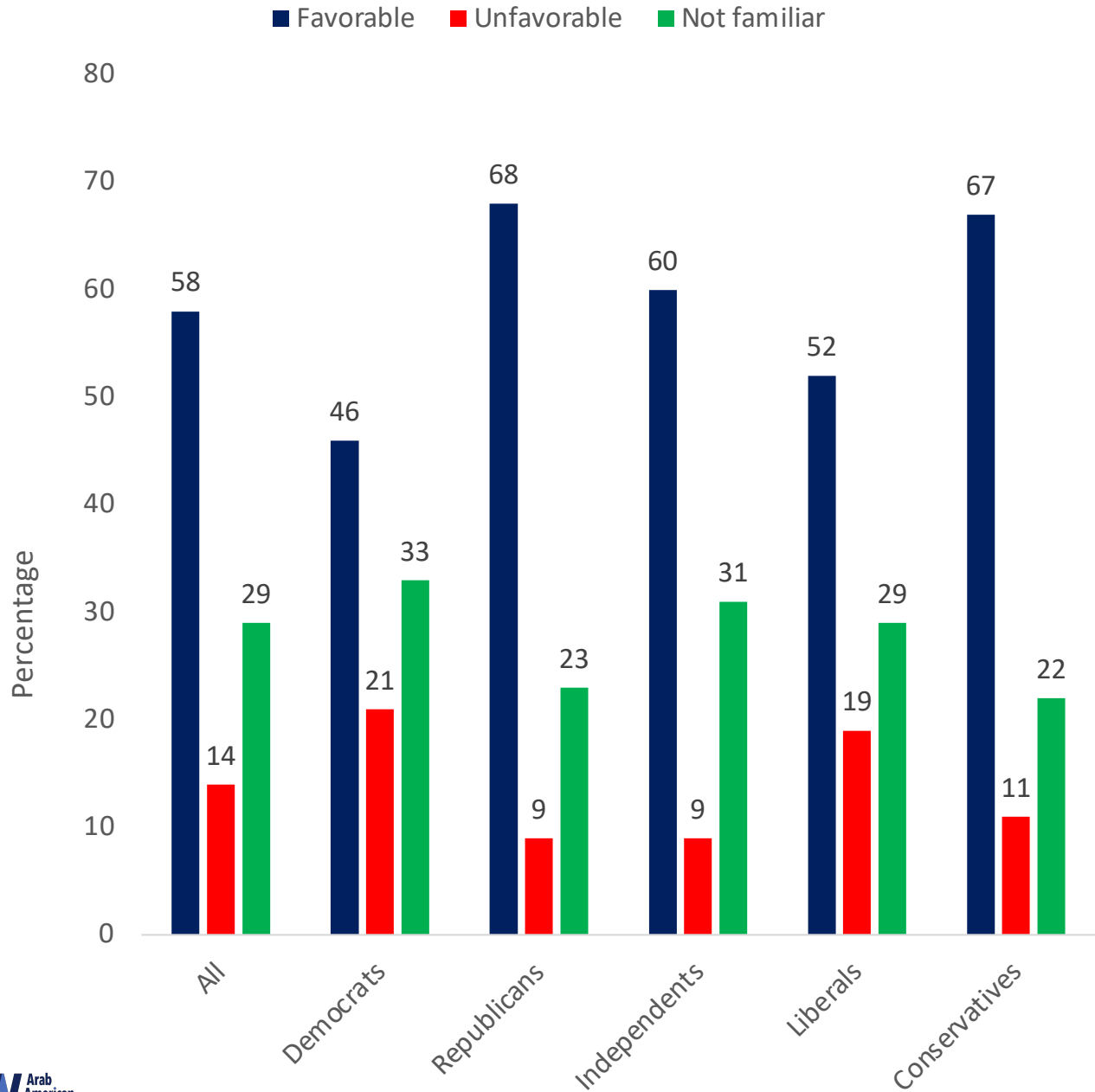
12. A plurality of all respondents, **41%, support the traditional US policy of opposing Israel's construction of settlements** for its population in the West Bank. Only 26% believe Israel has the right to build this housing in the West Bank. There is a partisan divide on this question with **Democrats registering 54% opposed to settlements** and only 13% supporting, while with **Republicans 44% are in support of Israel's settlement construction** and 30% opposed. [Figure 12]

13. When asked whether the US should "always provide unrestricted financial and military assistance to Israel" or "should not provide unrestricted military and financial assistance to Israel if it continues to violate US policy on settlement expansion in the West Bank," **a majority of 51% favor restricting aid as opposed to only 28% who support no restrictions.** **Democrats favor restricting aid by a 62% to 18% margin,** while Republicans are nearly evenly split at 42% supporting unrestricted aid and 39% in favor of restrictions. [Figure 13]

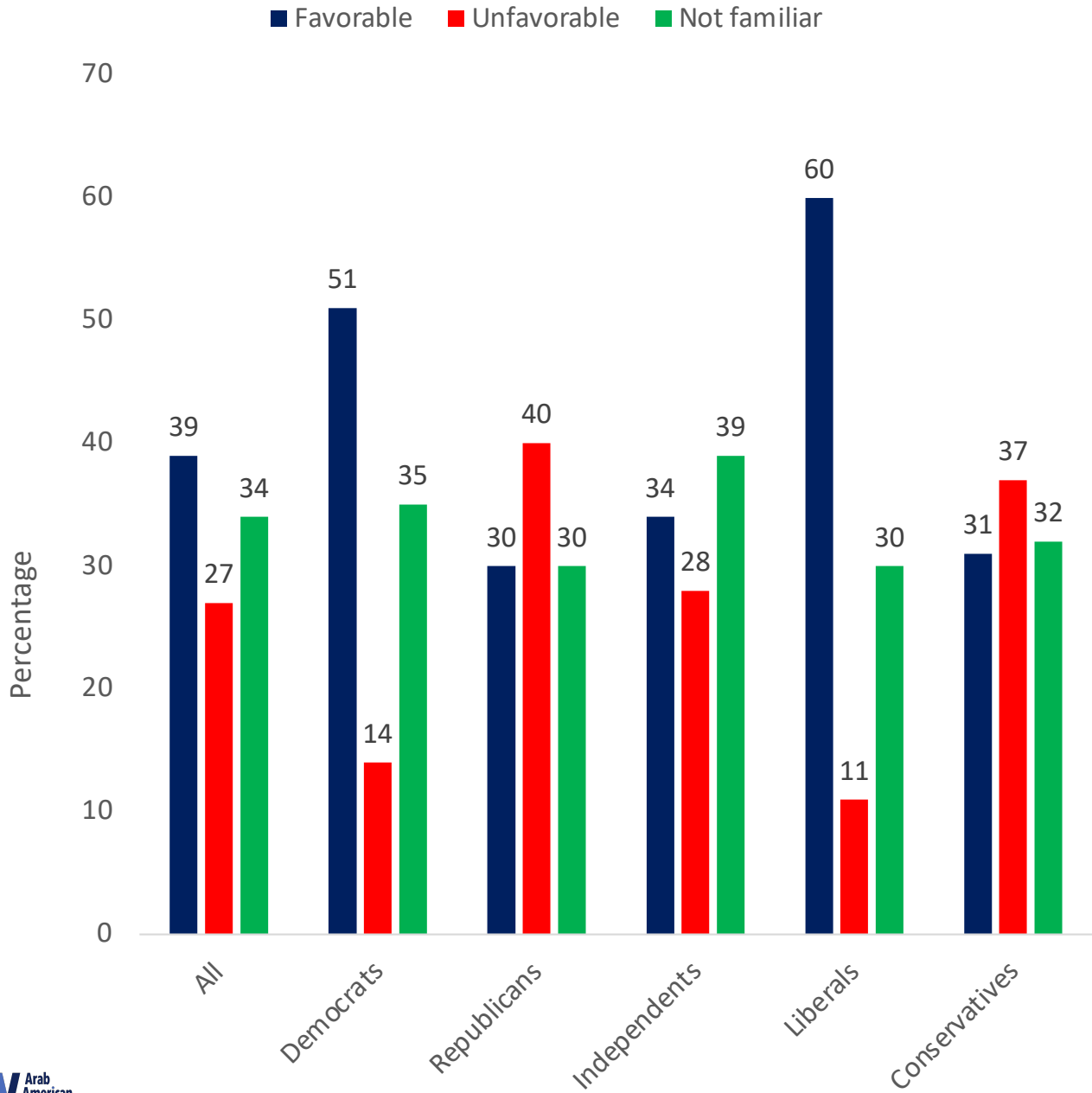
14. On the issue of the legitimacy of the call by opponents of Israeli settlements in the West Bank to peacefully boycott or impose sanctions on Israel to demonstrate displeasure with this policy, **43% of Americans say this is a "legitimate action to protest Israel's settlement policy"** against 27% who say it is not legitimate. There is a partisan split on this issue with a substantial majority of Democrats saying it is legitimate (58% vs. 16%), and Republicans, by a 40% to 32% margin, saying boycotting and sanctions are not legitimate forms of protest. [Figure 14]

I. Attitudes Toward Israelis and Palestinians

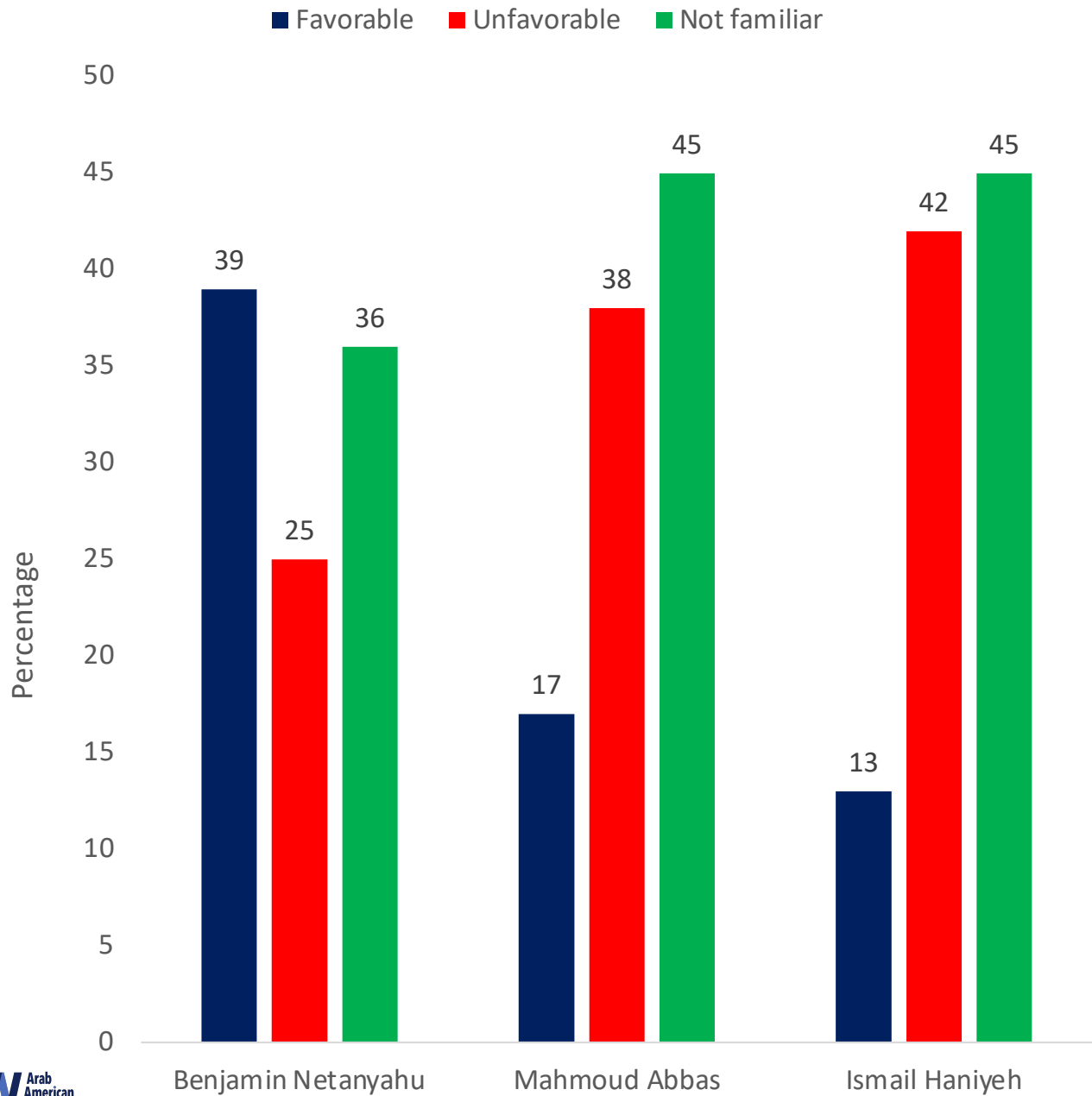
1. Opinion of Israelis



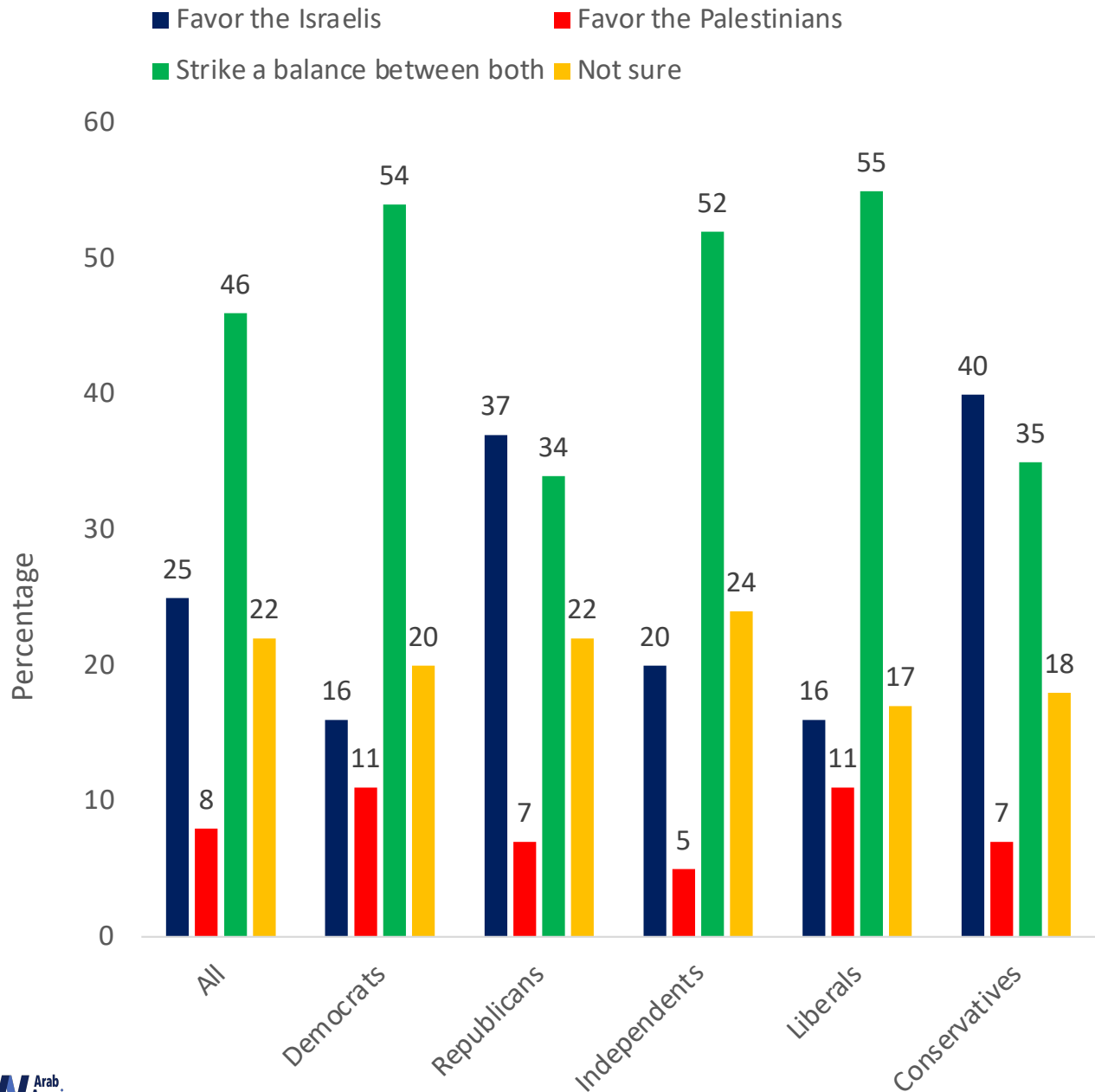
2. Opinion of Palestinians



3. Opinion of Key Leaders



4. How do you feel the Biden administration should conduct policy toward the Israeli/Palestinian conflict?

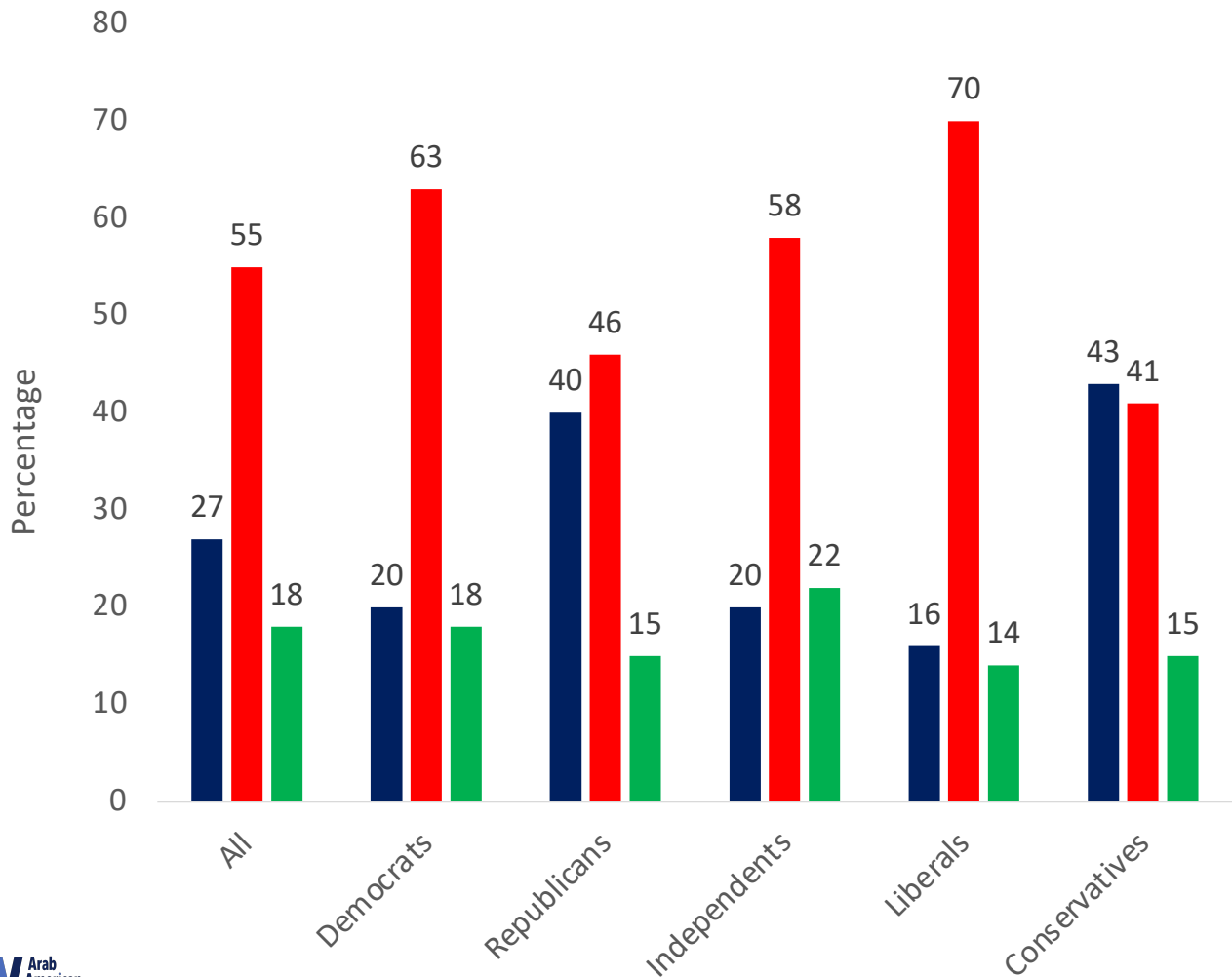


5. For each pair, please tell me which statement comes closer to your own views, even if neither is exactly right.

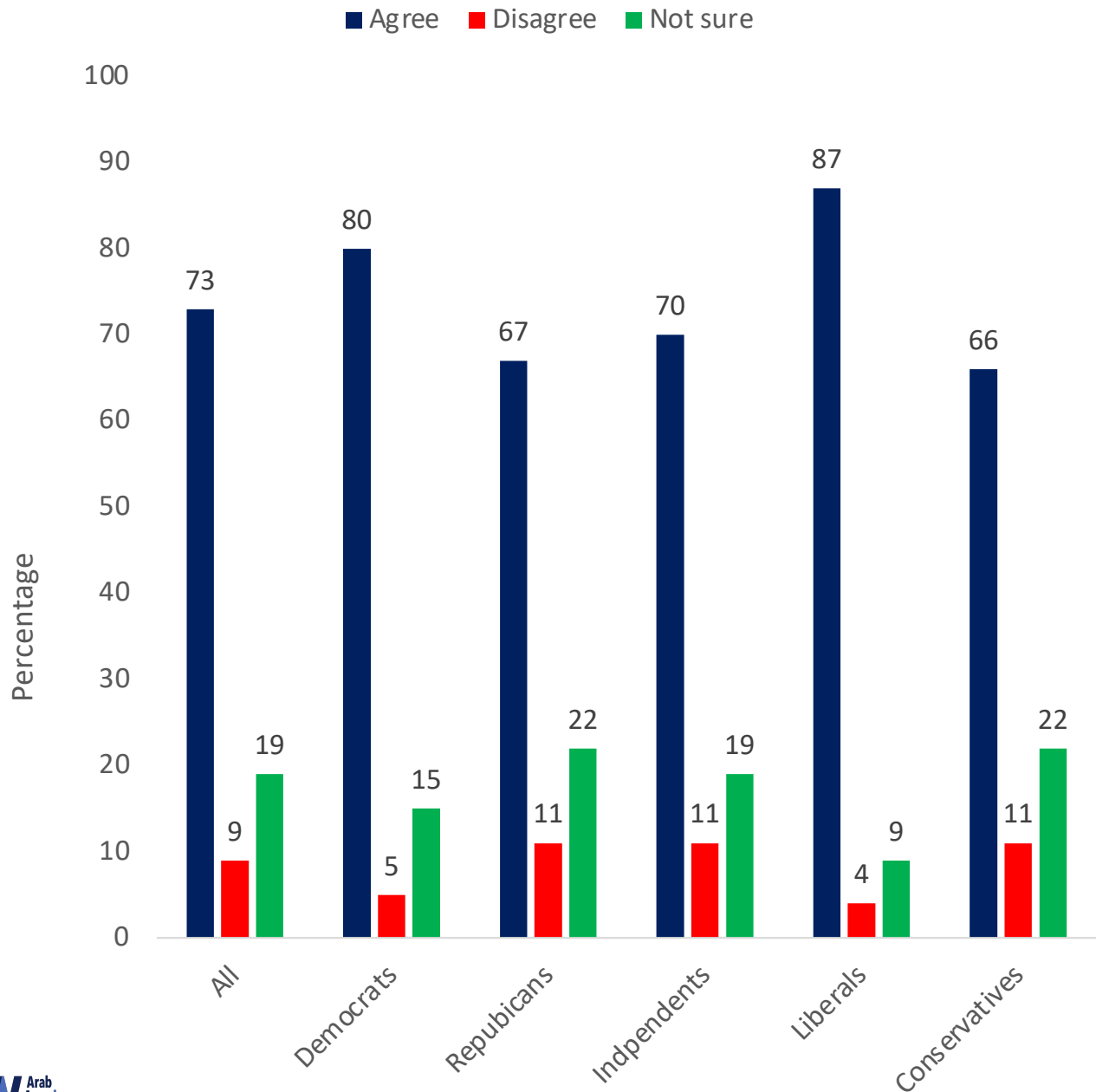
■ Statement A: The United States should always side with Israel

■ Statement B: The United States should always act as a fair and impartial broker between Israelis and Palestinians

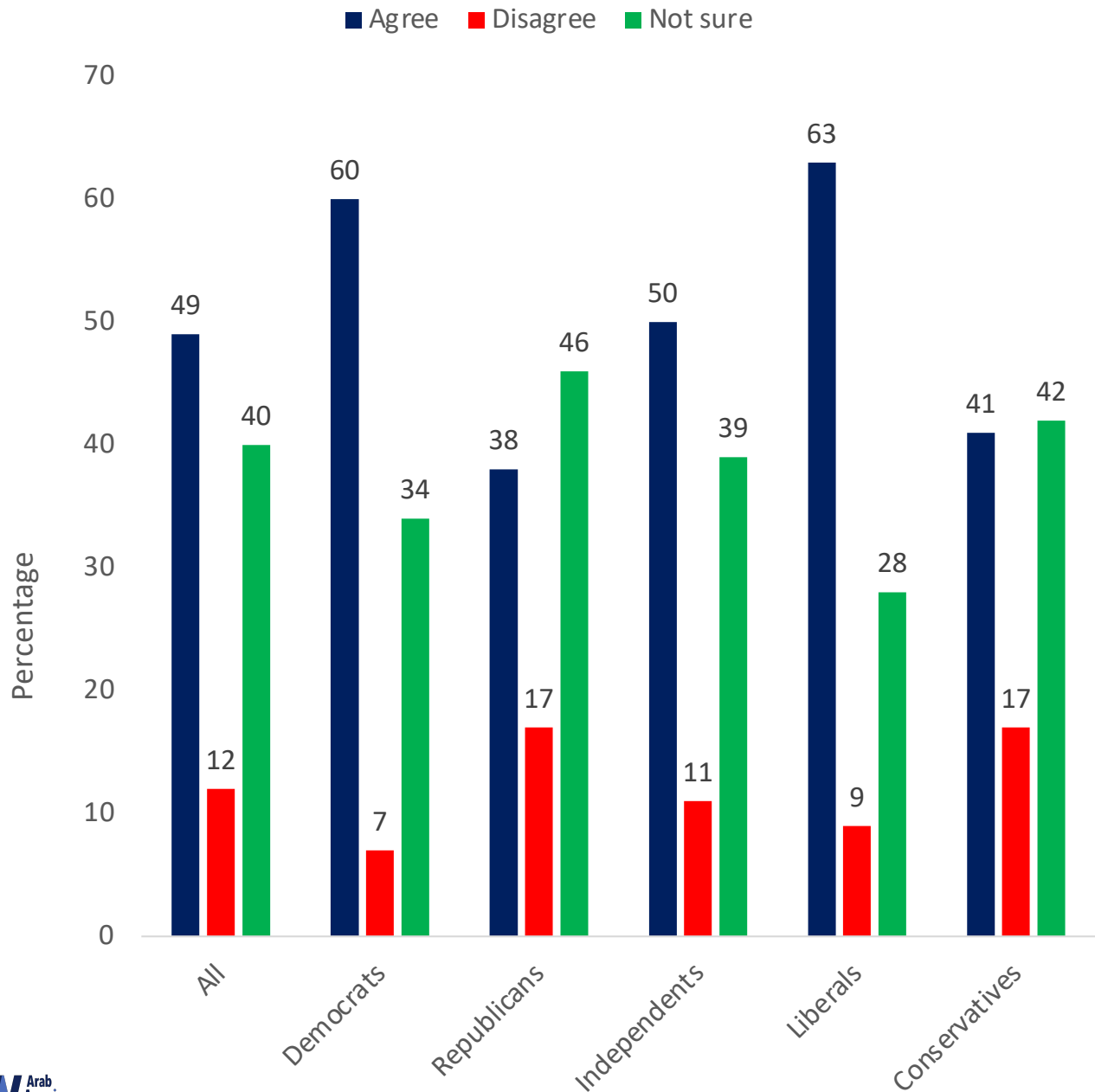
■ Not sure



6. Do you agree or disagree that Israelis and Palestinians are equal people entitled to equal rights?

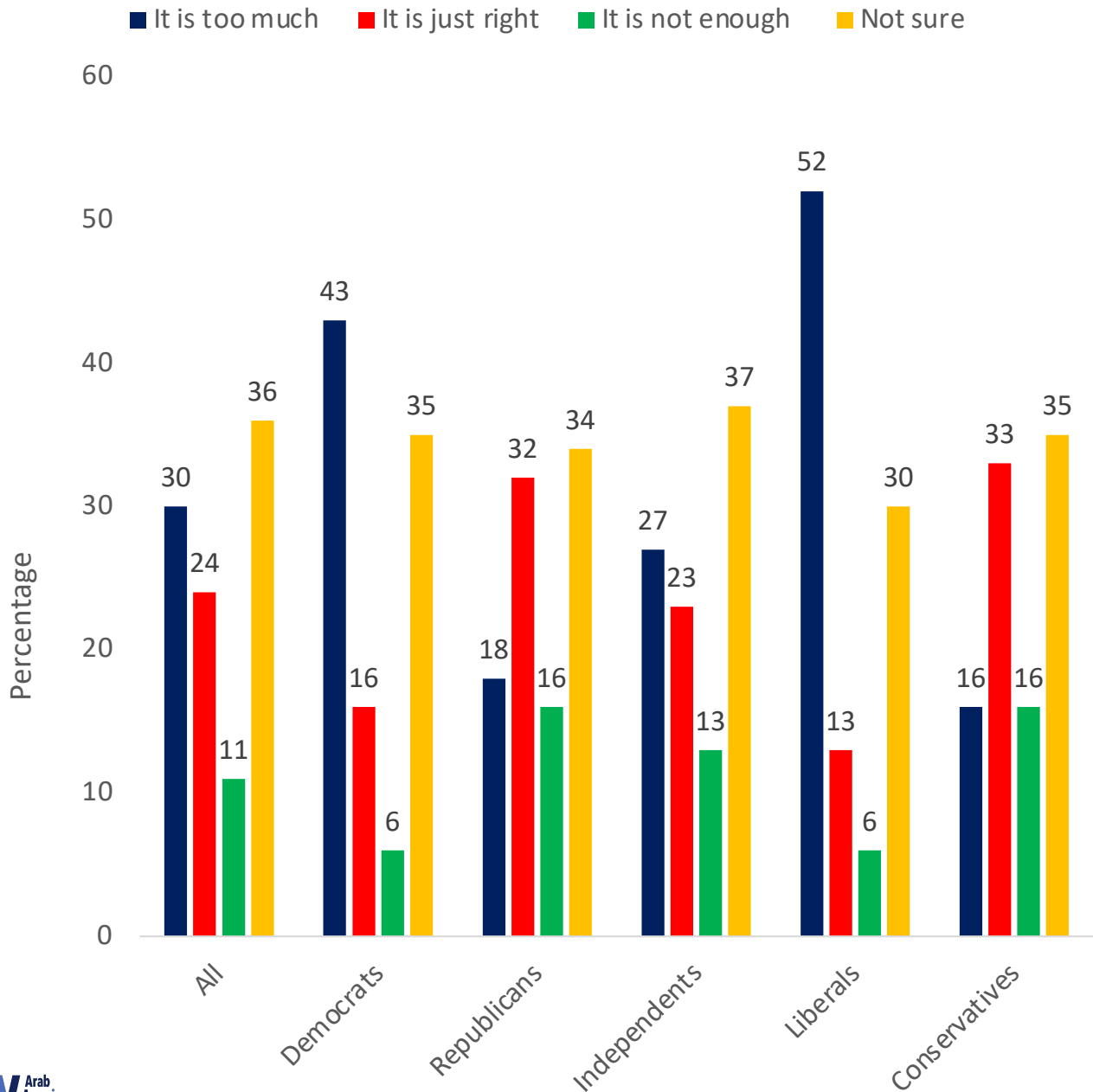


7. Do you agree or disagree that there should be an independent Palestinian state as part of a two-state solution to the Israeli/Palestinian conflict?

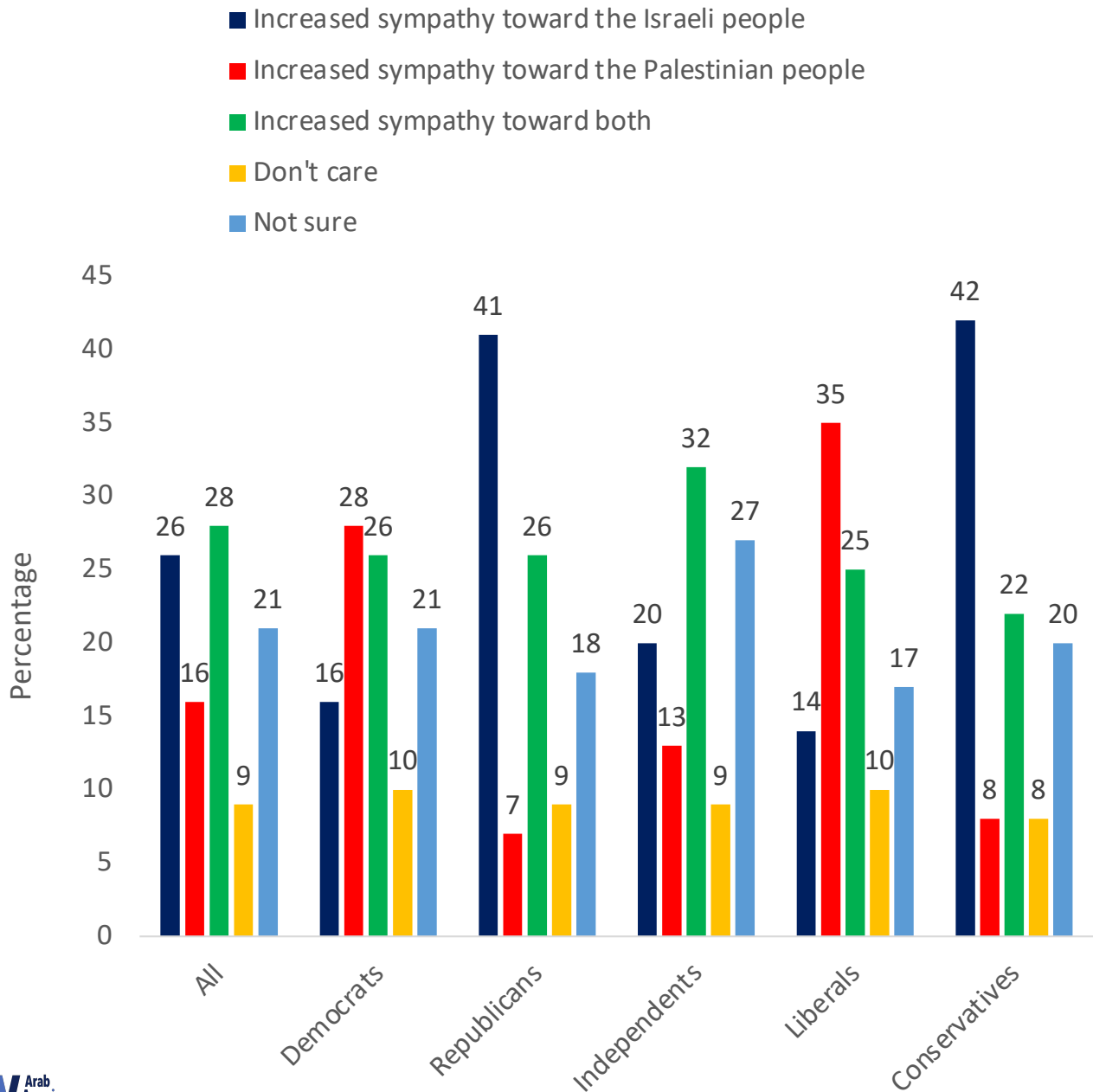


II. Issues from the Recent Conflict

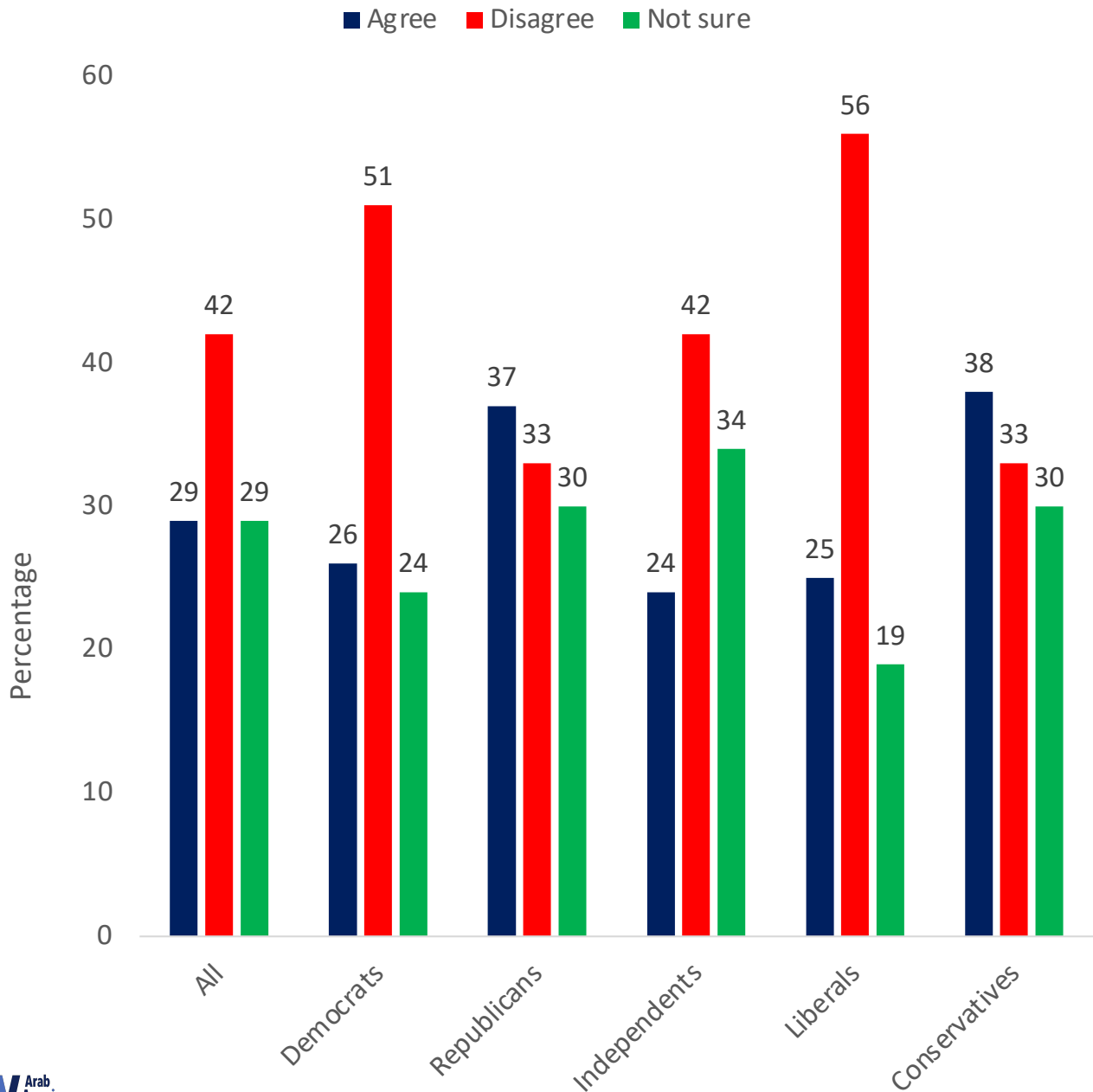
8. Regarding the current crisis, which do you believe represents most accurately Israel's use of force in Gaza?



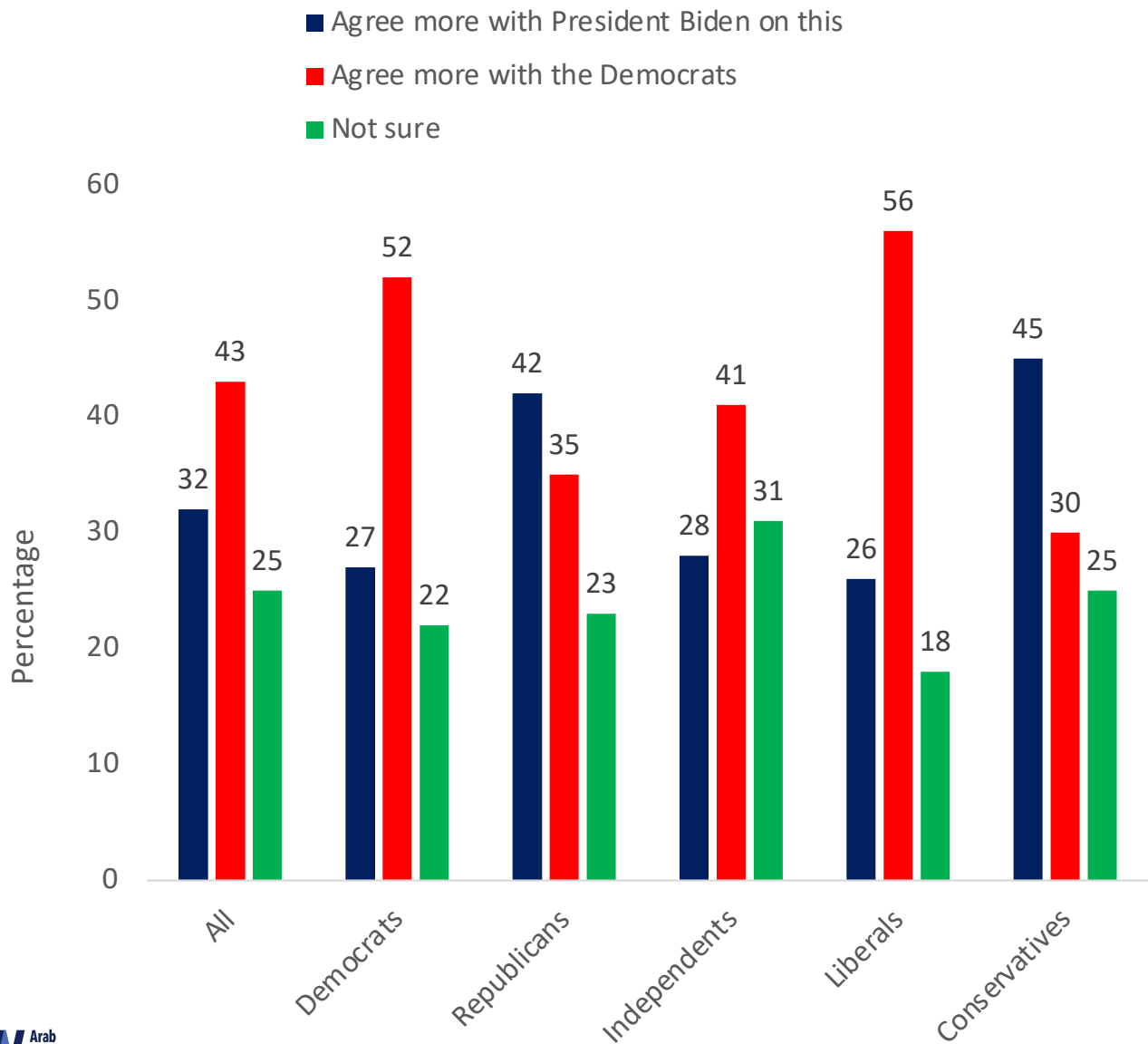
9. As a result of the current conflict, do you have...?



10. Do you agree or disagree that Israel is right in evicting the Palestinians from their homes?

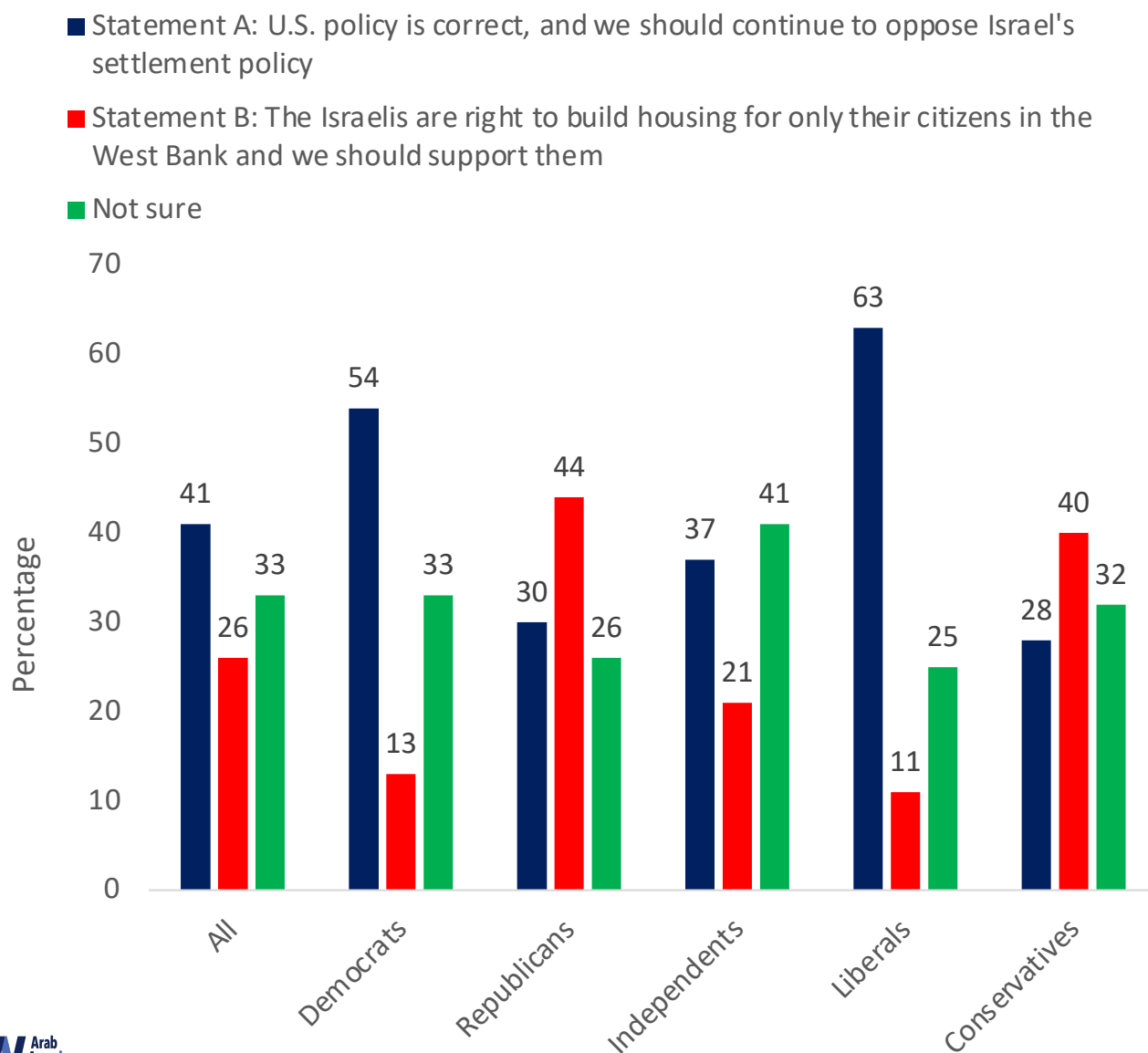


11. This month, President Biden approved \$735 million in precision bombs to Israel. Some Democrats in Congress say hold off. Would you say you agree more with President Biden on this or with those Democrats who are saying not now?



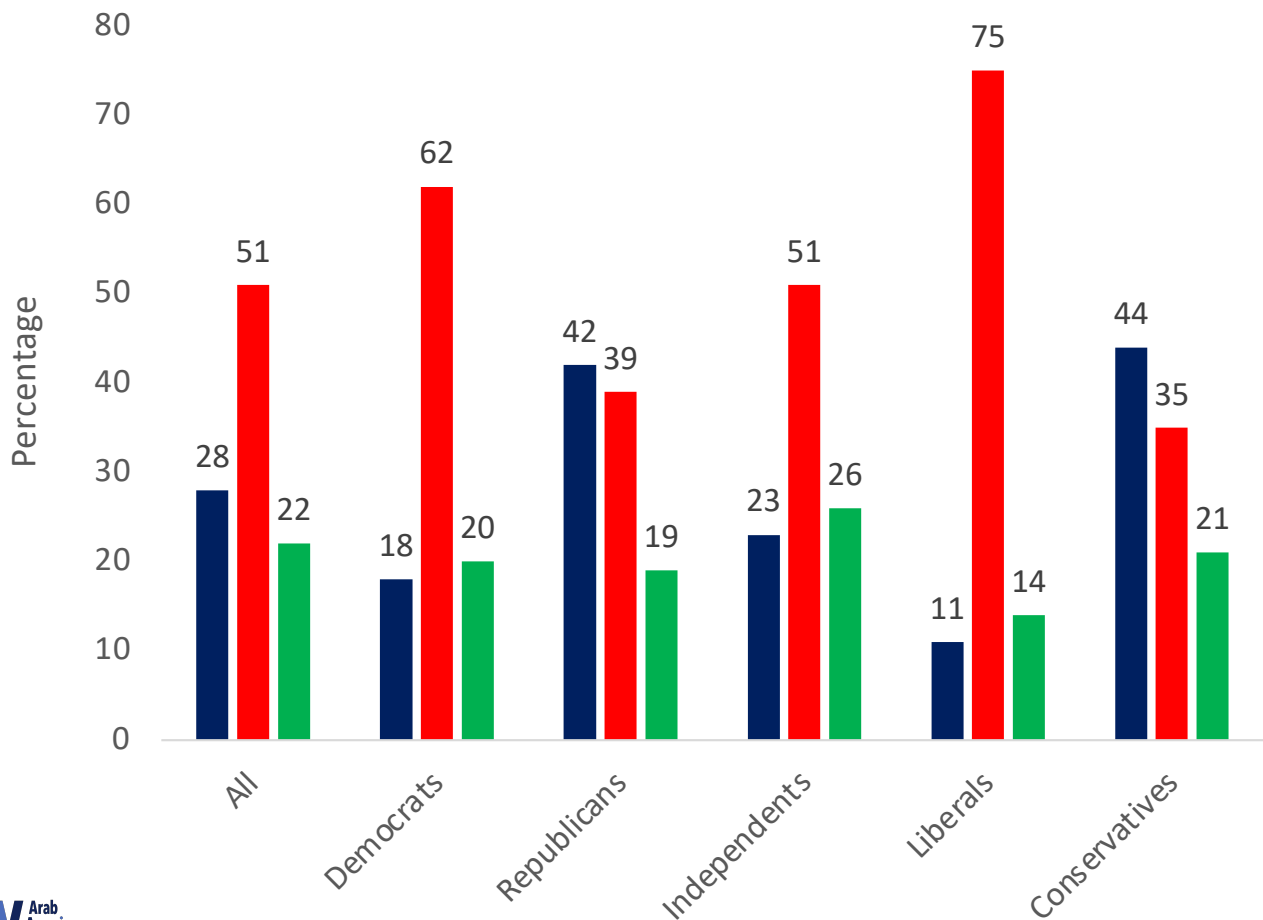
III. Settlements and US Policy

12. Since 1967 every US President has asked Israel to stop constructing settlements for its population in the areas of the West Bank since this makes it more difficult to find a peaceful resolution to the conflict. Israel maintains that it has the right to do so and has resettled over 600,000 of its people in these areas. Which of the following statements do you most agree?



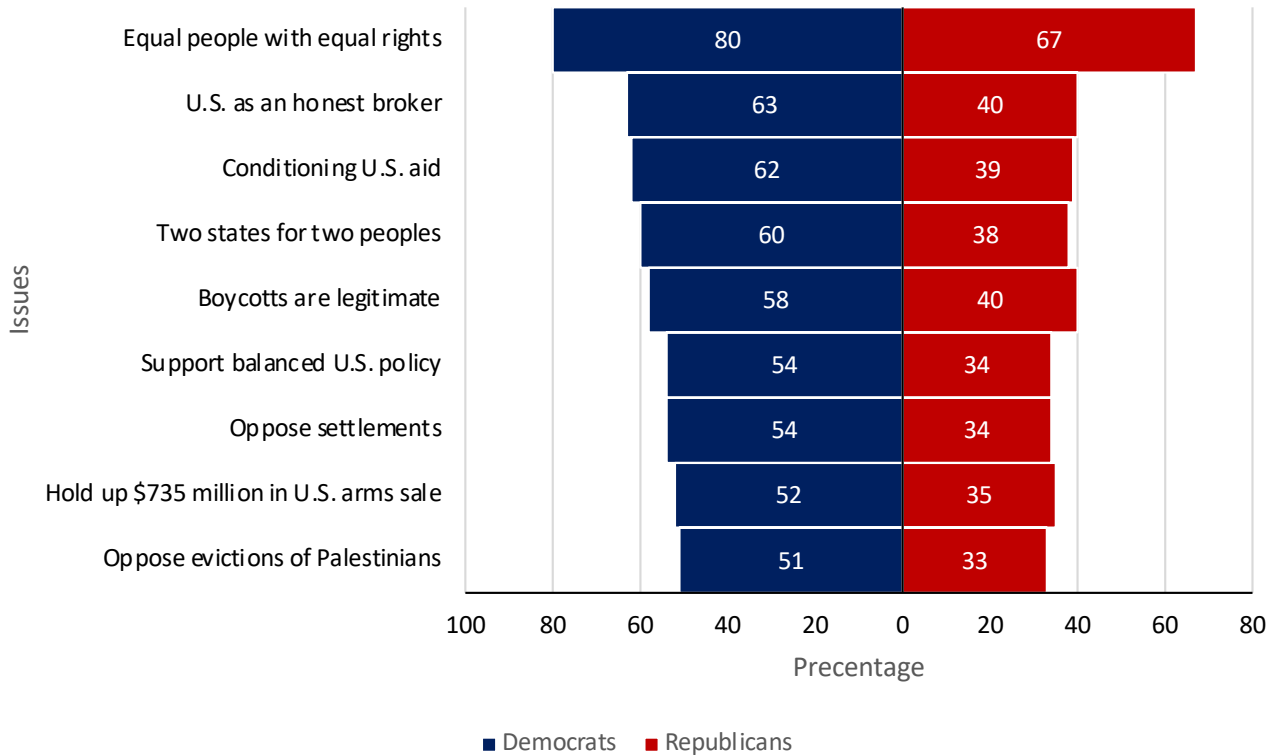
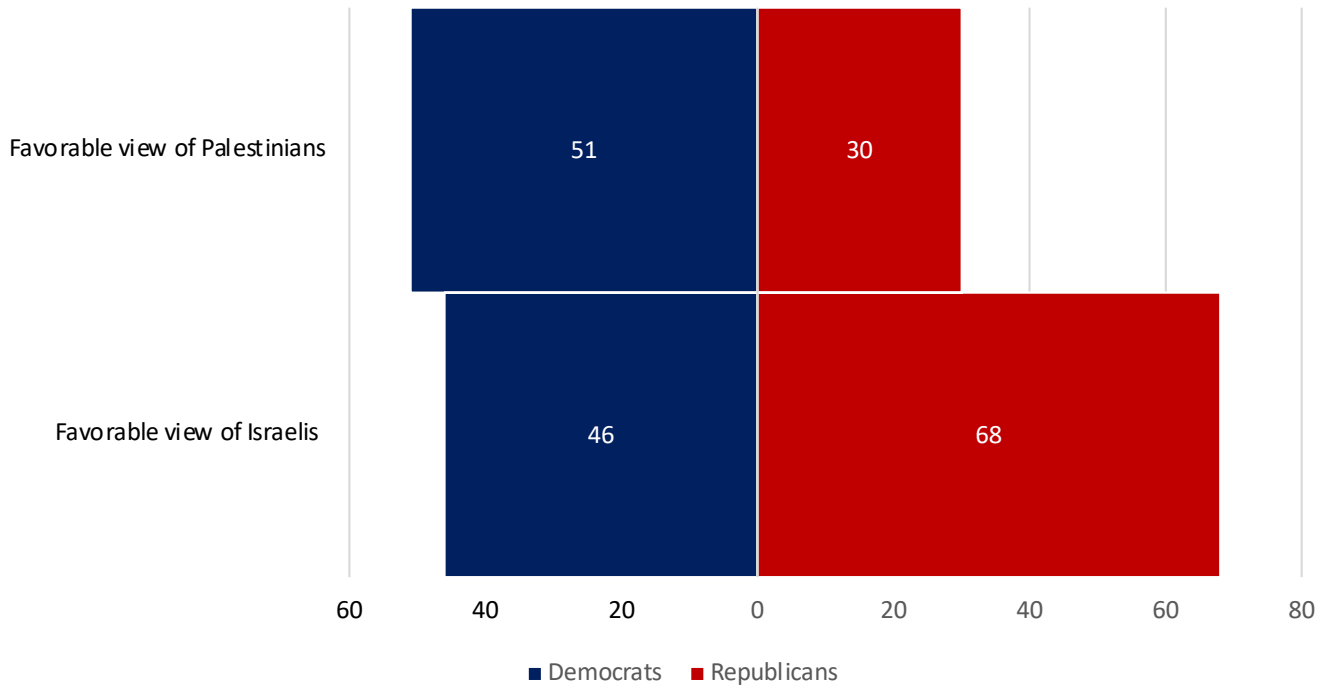
13. Which statement comes closer to your own view, even if neither is exactly right.

- Statement A: The United States should always provide unrestricted financial and military assistance to the Israeli government.
- Statement B: The United States should not provide unrestricted financial and military assistance to the Israeli government if it continues to violate US policy on settlement expansion in the West Bank.
- Not sure



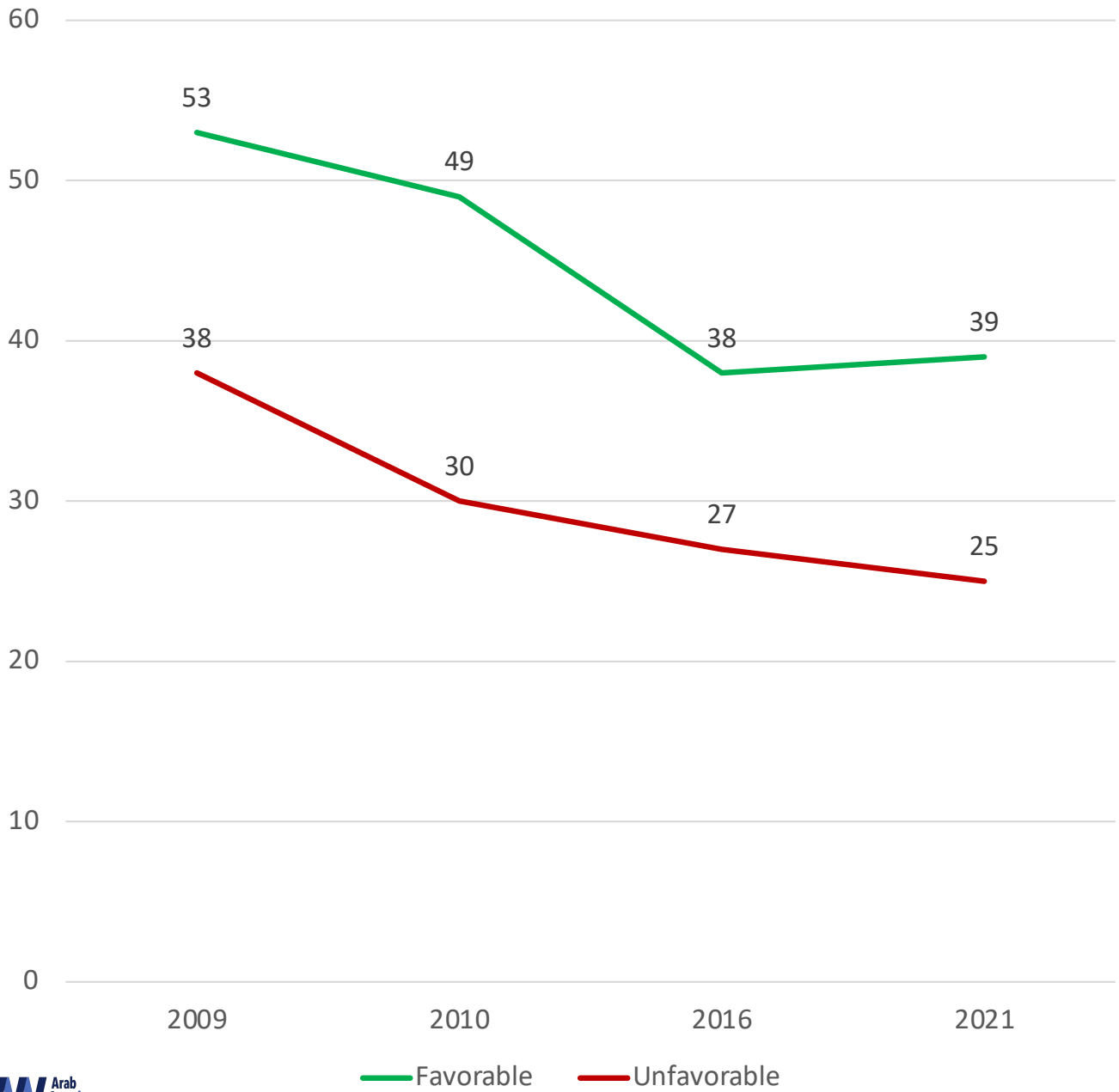
IV. Democrats vs. Republicans

Democrats vs. Republicans

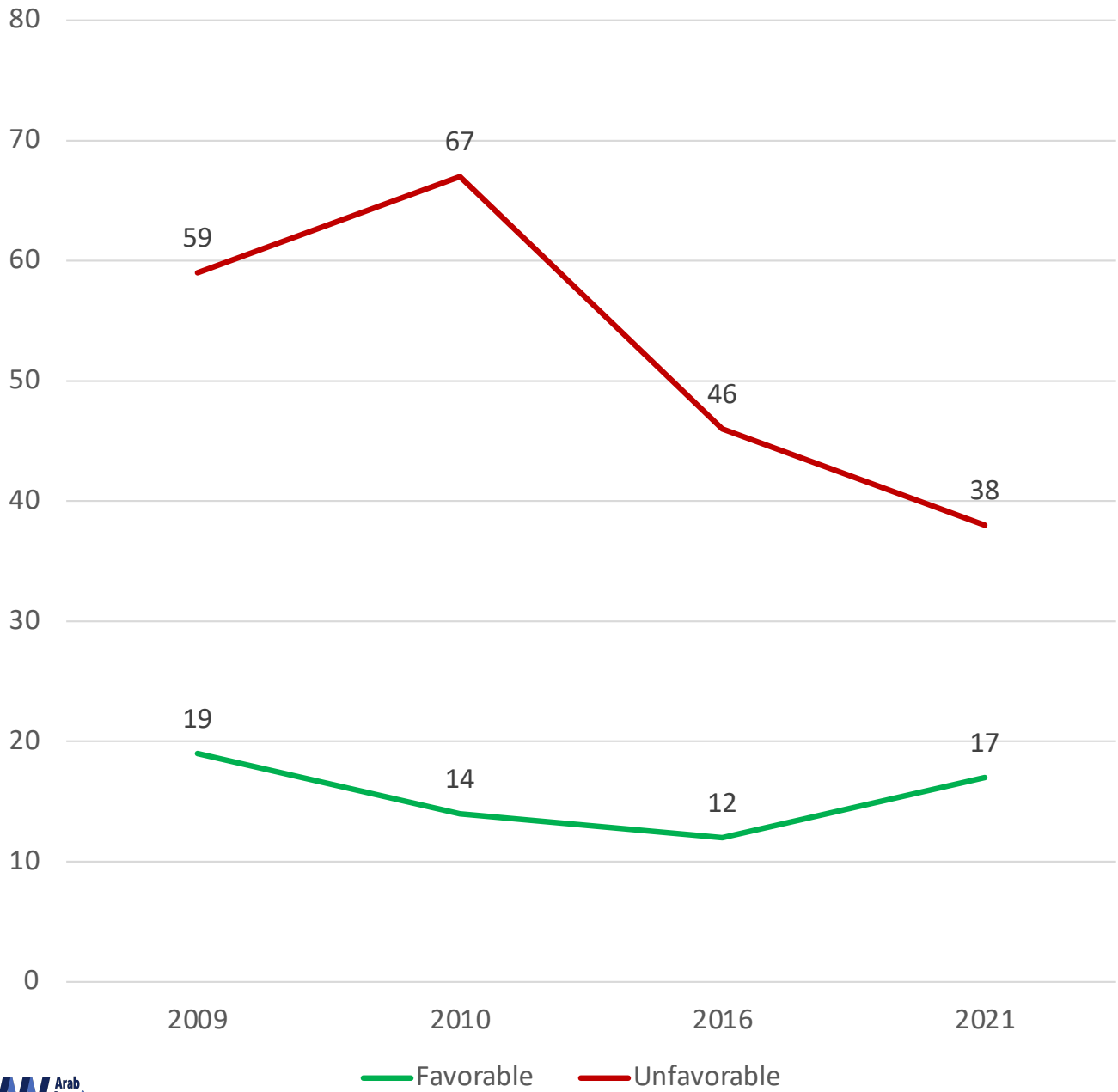


Trendlines

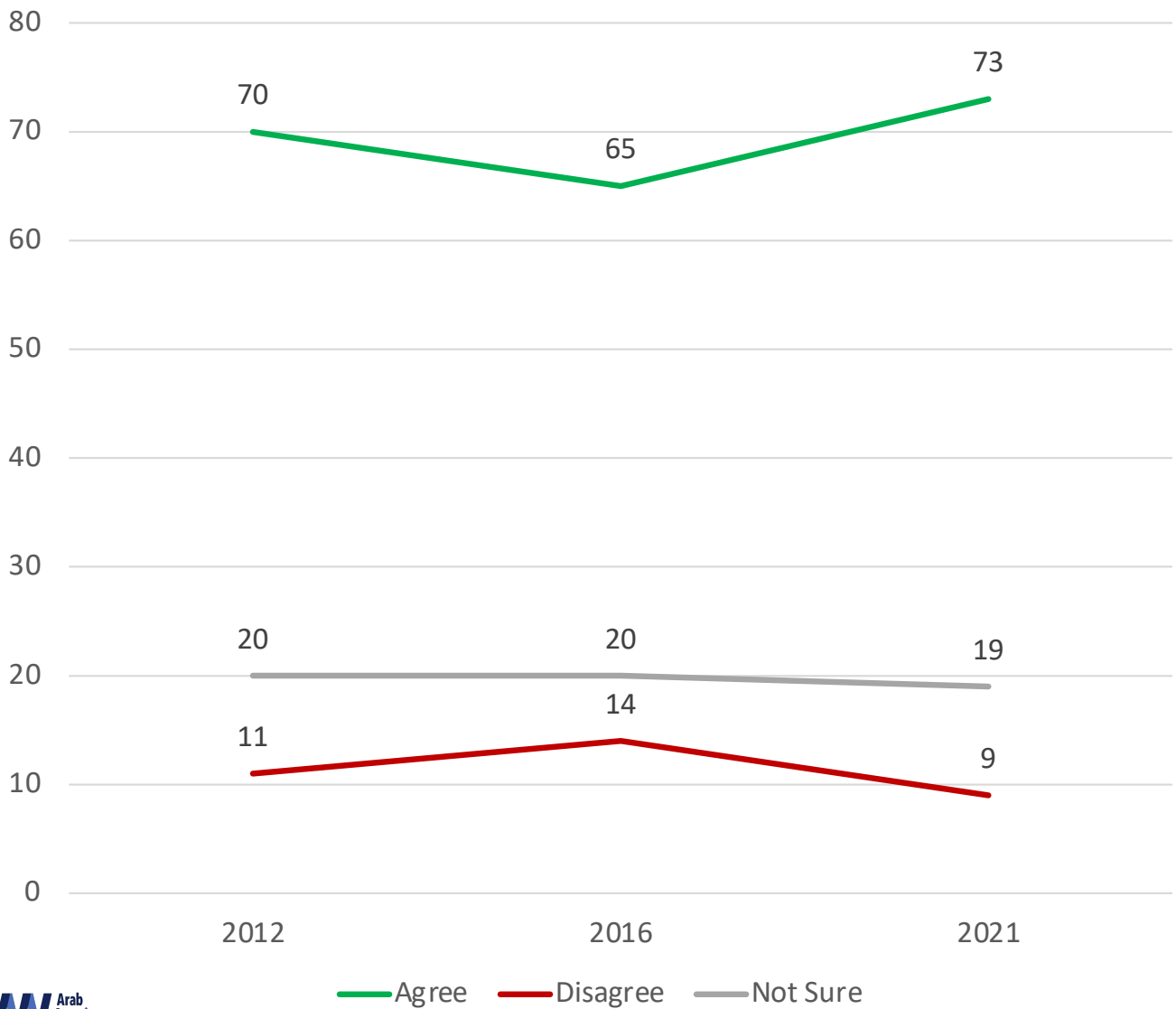
Opinion of Benjamin Netanyahu



Opinion of Mahmoud Abbas



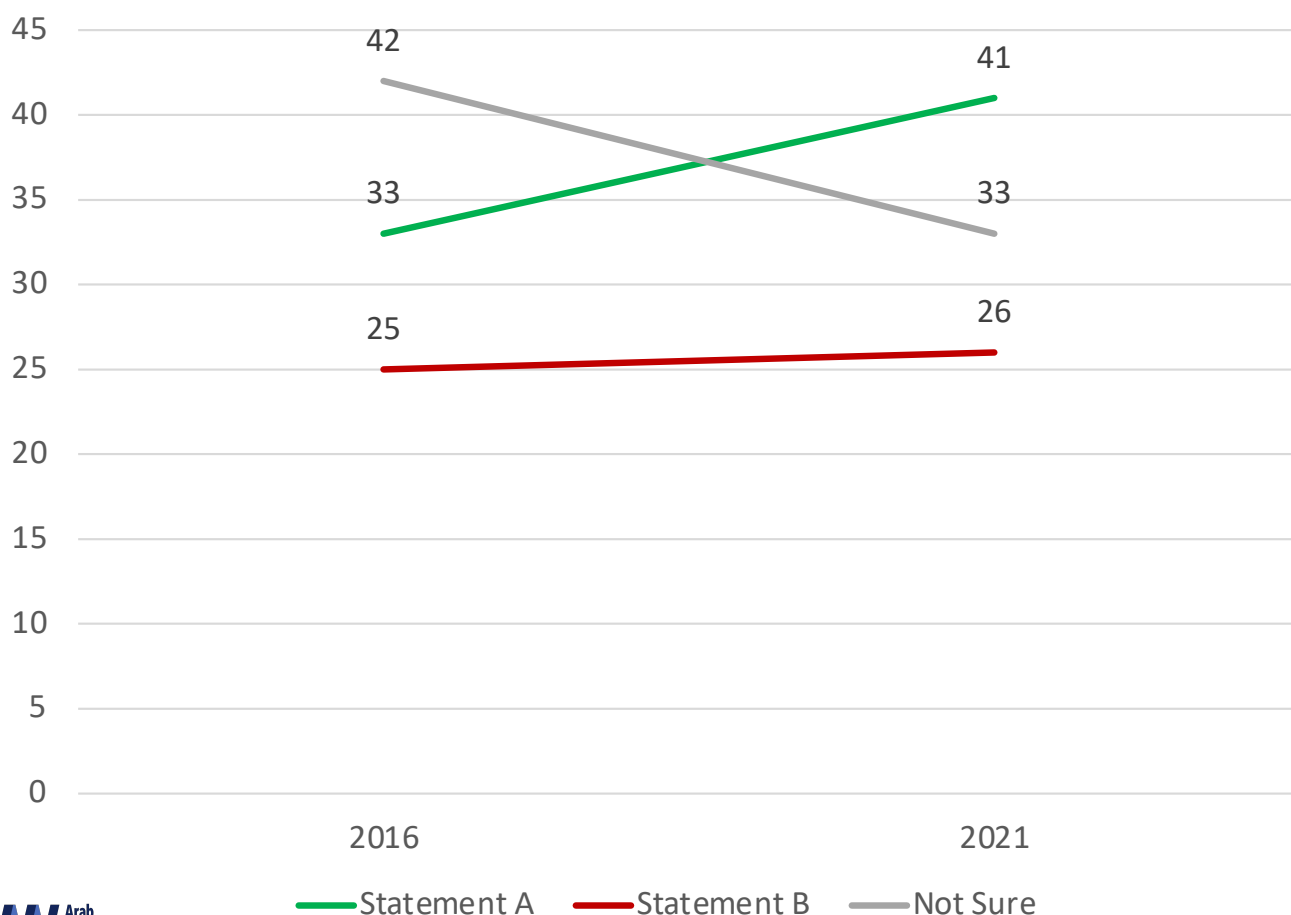
Do you agree or disagree that Israelis and Palestinians are equal people entitled to equal rights?



Since 1967, every US President has asked Israel to stop constructing settlements for its population in the areas of the West Bank since this makes it more difficult to find a peaceful resolution to the conflict. Israel maintains that it has a right to do so and has resettled over 600,000 of its people in these areas. Which of the following statements do you most agree?

Statement A: U.S. policy is correct, and we should continue to oppose Israel's settlement policy.

Statement B: The Israelis are right to build housing for only their citizens in the West Bank and we should support them.



Demographics and Methodology

Demographics and Methodology

John Zogby Strategies was commissioned by AAI to conduct an online poll of 1,011 Americans. The poll was conducted May 20, 2021. The margin of error +/- 3.1 percentage points.

Gender	Percent
Male	48%
Female	52%
Race	Percent
White	66%
Hispanic	13%
Black	13%
Asian	4%
Other	4%
Education	Percent
College	42%
No College	58%
Ideology	Percent
Very Liberal	7%
Liberal	17%
Moderate	38%
Conservative	23%
Very Conservative	15%